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PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKB #1819/01 3480728
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1978
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1912
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0616
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAKU 001819

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: DASD MACDOUGALL'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENTIAL
FOREIGN ADVISOR NOVRUZ MAMMADOV

REF: A. BAKU 01533

[1](#)B. BAKU 01582

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a December 9 discussion with Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary James MacDougall and the Ambassador, Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov said that as recent regional developments have again underscored, Azerbaijan has "no alternative" to friendship and partnership with the West and is committed to pursuing this path of development "carefully, to avoid creating problems or obstacles." Mammadov underscored the GOAJ,s concern over recent Russian and Iranian pressure, pointing with alarm to recent open threats and territorial claims in the press from Iranian religious leaders who stated that "even the US cannot protect you" if Iran decides to attack. Mammadov said that Azerbaijan "needs a USG reaction to Iran,s recent statements -- at least one sentence -- otherwise, it leaves the impression that Azerbaijan can be attacked and no one will react." He said the GOAJ "is afraid to make bold statements because we are not confident we will be supported." Mammadov said that while Azerbaijan strives to maintain good relations with Russia, "we know inside what they really think and we see their real intentions" as they are trying "to restore the political and strategic position they lost ten years ago." He said that in light of recent Russian pressure on gas and migrant workers, Azerbaijan is considering raising the rent for Russian access to the Gabal radar station. Mammadov appreciated MacDougall's update on a potential Train and Equip program. Mammadov also welcomed MacDougall's information about an upcoming USG delegation to discuss Iran with the GOAJ. Mammadov considered First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva's visit to the US a success, despite the recent closure of the ANS television station. Mammadov acknowledged that as a relatively new government, the GOAJ did not always "properly assess the impact of our decisions" and the likely consequences. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary James MacDougall and the Ambassador, accompanied by the DATT, met with Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov on December 9.

Affirming Western Orientation, Bilateral Cooperation

[1](#)3. (C) Mammadov said the bilateral relationship is "very

important for us" from the political, security, and economic points of view. Mammadov affirmed the GOAJ's policy of integration with the West, saying Azerbaijan "has no alternative to friendship and partnership with the West, the EU and the US," as recent regional developments have underscored. Azerbaijan is committed to continuing this "path of development," but with an obvious eye to its neighbors, will do so "carefully: we should take these steps in a way that they will not create problems or obstacles." Echoing President Aliyev's earlier comments that Azerbaijan's success "irritates" Iran, Mammadov suggested that "Azerbaijan's success" is creating "jealousy" among some other states in the region.

We Understand Russia's Real Intentions

¶4. (C) Mammadov remarked that Azerbaijan has "very good relations with Russia," but recent developments demonstrate that "we must also be careful...as neighbors, we try to keep good relations, but we know inside what they really think and we see their real intentions." The Russian decree on migration restrictions is an example of Russia's feelings toward Azerbaijan. During President Putin and Aliyev's last meeting, Putin said that the status of Azerbaijanis living in Russia must be legalized or they will be forced to leave, according to Mammadov. Russia is acting in this manner because it has felt "more confident" in the past several years, and "thinks it now can restore" the political and strategic position it lost ten years ago, Mammadov said. He said Russia's "resurgence" is "now more obvious on the global stage, to the EU and to the US." However, it is "more a threat to Azerbaijan than to the EU or the US."

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"Tense" Relations with Iran

¶5. (C) Mammadov characterized relations with Iran as "tense." Azerbaijan's development path "creates jealousy," in Iran. Despite the fact that Azerbaijan tries to be careful in its relations with Iran, Iranian religious leaders including Khomeini have made "open threats" and "territorial claims" recently in the press. For example, one Iranian article referred to Azerbaijan as a former Iranian province which could be taken back, while another article said that Iran could organize terrorist acts in Azerbaijan. Mammadov noted that one article quoted Khomeini stating bluntly that if Iran decides to act, "even the US cannot protect you." Mammadov passed several articles to the Ambassador. Mammadov noted that President Ahmadinejad had told President Aliyev directly, as well, that if Azerbaijan threatens Iran, Iran will strike, and "the US cannot help." (Comment: Aliyev has told us the same -- reftel. End comment.)

¶6. (C) Mammadov said that despite these threats, President Aliyev is "firm -- we are committed to our course. We will survive and overcome these pressures, whether from the north or south." Indeed, these pressures "will push us more to the West," Mammadov observed.

Consultations on Iran

¶7. (C) MacDougall told Mammadov that the US is preparing to send a State-DoD team at the Assistant Secretary level to discuss Iran-related issues with the GOAJ. The purpose of the discussion is to share views about what is going on inside Iran and to discuss how to deal with the security threats posed by Iran. The USG intends to do this quietly to avoid increasing tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran. The Ambassador noted that President Aliyev welcomed this proposal during a recent meeting. Mammadov supported the visit, stating that "we understand each other" and such visits could

play an important role in the bilateral relationship: "such visits are excellent, of great importance, are support for our country, they give new energy to the relationship."

¶18. (C) Mammadov highlighted two factors that make dealing with Iran even more challenging. Ahmadinejad's "adventuresome behavior" gives confidence to the Iranian people. International developments also encourage Ahmadinejad. Mammadov then asked MacDougall and the Ambassador about reports that some US elites believed the USG should enter into a dialogue with Iran and Syria to help bring stability to Iraq. Mammadov noted that exactly what this means was "not clear to me," but that his position is that "we can talk to them." MacDougall explained that this was one recommendation of an independent commission and did not represent a shift in USG policy.

¶19. (C) Mammadov said the GOAJ is not confident that the West and the USG will support Azerbaijan if Tehran increases its pressure against Baku. He recounted the 2001 incident when Iran refused to allow British Petroleum workers to approach and explore the disputed Alov oil field. He noted that neither the UK nor the US "said anything, diplomatically" about Iran's behavior. Mammadov said that Azerbaijan "needs a USG reaction to Iran's recent statements -- at least one sentence -- otherwise, it leaves the impression that Azerbaijan can be attacked and no one will react." He said the GOAJ "is afraid to make bold statements because we are not confident we will be supported." Mammadov pointed out that even in Azerbaijan's complex relations with Russia, Putin has agreed that on certain subjects, he will publicly support Azerbaijan. Even on the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict, Russia takes a positive public line, "even though we know they will not want to solve NK in Azerbaijan's interest."

¶10. (C) MacDougall acknowledged this was an important point and one that should be discussed at the planned meeting on Iran issues.

Potential Train and Equip

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¶11. (C) MacDougall said he was pleased with his earlier meetings with Defense Minister Abiyev and Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov. Following up with Aliyev's request to former SECDEF Rumsfeld, MacDougall noted that the USG is still developing a plan for a potential Train and Equip program for Azerbaijan. MacDougall noted that the funding for any potential program would likely come from Coalition Support Funds, which are designated for the Global War on Terror (GWOT), and any potential program would require Congressional support. The USG would require that any Azerbaijani military units receiving this training be deployed in support of a GWOT mission. MacDougall said that since the Azerbaijani military is moving toward NATO standards, perhaps the potentially trained units could be sent to Afghanistan to assist the NATO-led mission there.

¶12. (C) Mammadov acknowledged the proposal, noting that it should be discussed with Defense Minister Abiyev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov. Mammadov suggested that Azerbaijani troops trained under the auspices of a potential Train and Equip program could also replace Azerbaijani units currently serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Kosovo.

¶13. (C) Mammadov also said that in the coming one to five months, the USG could have "a window for favorable conditions for this mission." Mammadov stated that the GOAJ does not know what the future of relations with Russia will be like. If Russia continues to increase its pressure on Azerbaijan, the GOAJ intends to raise the rent for Russia to have access to the Gabal radar station. Mammadov referred to the current

rent the GOAJ receives as "merely symbolic," and the GOAJ could increase the rent to 100 million dollars.

National Security Concept

¶14. (C) MacDougall congratulated Mammadov on the GOAJ's "serious effort" in drafting its National Security Concept (NSC). The Ambassador noted that Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov told her several days ago that he wants the USG to be engaged in the drafting of the follow-on documents, including the Military Doctrine and the Foreign Policy Strategy. Specifically, Azimov said he wants a government-to-governmental dialogue, not a US non-government advisor assisting in the drafting process (septel). The Ambassador noted that she would be working with Washington to see how the USG can assist. Mammadov thanked the Ambassador. He remarked that the NSC would have been finished earlier, but the NK conflict slowed down the process. He said that if the NK conflict were settled, "within one month" Azerbaijan would begin implementing the NSC.

First Lady Visit and ANS Closure

¶15. (C) Mammadov thought the visit of Mehriban Aliyeva, the Azerbaijani First Lady, to the US was successful. He said that before the visit, there was concern within the GOAJ that Aliyeva would be asked about the closure of the ANS television station. The Ambassador noted that this issue was indeed raised in the First Lady's meetings, which should have come as no surprise. MacDougall and the Ambassador noted that steps inconsistent with Azerbaijan's stated commitment to democratic development quickly develop into a large problem. Mammadov said that given that Azerbaijan has been independent for only 15 years, and the GOAJ's "limited statehood and bureaucratic experience, sometimes we cannot properly assess the decisions we make and assess the consequences properly." He also stated that the ANS problem could have been solved in a "different forum," which would not have "drawn such negative consequences." He concluded that "you fall and you learn -- we should have prepared better." The Ambassador noted the importance of addressing the issues related to ANS' closure as soon as possible. The situation highlighted the significance of A/S Lowenkron's upcoming visit as a forum for discussing how to develop the independent media in Azerbaijan. The Ambassador also said that President Aliyev recently affirmed his openness to this dialogue.

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Comment

¶16. (C) Mammadov's comment on the GOAJ's lack of confidence that the West would support Azerbaijan if it is threatened by Iran is a concern that we have heard with increasing frequency from the most senior levels of Azerbaijani government, including President Aliyev. It will be a key dynamic underlying bilateral discussions on Iran; we urge again that the USG prepare to address this question during the upcoming consultations.

¶17. (U) DASD MacDougall cleared this message.
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